

5 Techy Things

This Friday Five was inspired by one of the many blogs I read. I hope it inspires you like it did me! If you've set the goal of trying something new in your classroom this year (shouldn't that always be one of our goals), here are five techy things you could try this year.

1. Build a Blog or Build a Better Blog

Blogs can serve many purposes for teachers. You can use a blog to communicate information to parents and students. You can use a blog to create a running journal of classroom activities and lessons throughout the year. Blogs can be used by students to record and reflect on their own learning. Make your students contributing authors on a class blog and have them write a weekly reflection on their own learning.

Three good platforms for classroom blogging are [Blogger](#), [Edublogs](#), and [Kid Blog](#). All three of those platforms are very easy to start as they don't require any technical knowledge on your part. All three of those platforms allow you to control your blog's visibility settings. I have used all three. I am currently using Kid Blog and I am very pleased with how it is working with my class.

2. Build a Wiki With Your Students

Building pages on a wiki is a great way for students to record and share knowledge about topics they've researched. Many times students will discover that through a wiki they create they will compile more information than their textbook

Teachers and students can also use wikis to create digital portfolios. Students can create and edit their own pages to show-off the work they're most proud of.

[Wikispaces](#), [PB Works](#), and [Wet Paint](#) provide free wiki hosting. I prefer Wikispaces because they provide free advertising-free wiki hosting to teachers.

3. Create Videos Without Purchasing any Equipment

Video is a powerful form of communication. It wasn't that long ago that classroom video projects required possession of expensive editing software

and other equipment. That is no longer the case.

Today, anyone with access to the web can make a high-quality video production. Two favorite web-based video creation services are [Animoto](#) and [JayCut](#). Of the two [Animoto](#) is the easiest to use while [JayCut](#) offers the most editing options.

4. Create Maps to Tell a Story

Maps are obviously useful for Social Studies teachers but did you know that you can also use multimedia maps to tell a story? [Google Maps](#) and [Google Earth](#) can both be used to create a multimedia story. Try having your students write the biography of a famous person by plotting points on a map and adding text, images, and videos about that person to each placemark. Visit Jerome Burg's [Google Lit Trips](#) to learn more about using Google Earth in a literature course. Visit Tom Barrett's [Maths Maps](#) to get ideas for using maps in mathematics lessons.

5. Try Backchanneling in Your Classroom

As staffing cuts create larger class sizes, it is becoming more difficult for some teachers to hear every student's question and or comment. Some students are reluctant to verbally share their thoughts in the classroom. And some students just have to blurt-out every thought or question they have as soon as they have it. Creating a backchannel for your students can address all three of those problems.

A backchannel is another name for a chat room in which your students type their questions and comments whenever they have them. You can then address those questions and comments immediately, have students reply to each other, or address the questions when time permits.

Here are some school-friendly services that can be used to host backchannels: [Today's Meet](#), [Edmodo](#), and [Present.ly](#).

Have a great weekend!!!